

**10/24/06**

## **APHIS Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) Emergency Order – Impacts on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Operations**

### **What does the APHIS emergency order state?**

On Tuesday October 24, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) issued an emergency order prohibiting the importation of certain live fish from two Canadian provinces into the U.S. and the interstate movement of the same species between eight states bordering the Great Lakes due to outbreaks of viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS). VHS does not pose a risk to people but can be highly destructive to certain species of fish.

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/content/2006/10/vhsfish.shtml>

### **What is VHS?**

VHS is a destructive viral disease that can cause internal hemorrhaging and death in fish. The disease does not pose a risk to people, but it has been detected in a number of fish species previously not known to be susceptible including baitfish species, Coho salmon and channel catfish. A list of susceptible fish species can be found at the APHIS web site:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/aqua/pdf/vhs\\_susceptible\\_species.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/aqua/pdf/vhs_susceptible_species.pdf)

### **How is the Fish and Wildlife Service responding to APHIS emergency order?**

The Fish and Wildlife Service has processes in place to insure that its fish management programs will not contribute to VHS infections in managed populations. The Fish and Wildlife Service will have representatives on the stakeholder team that will assist APHIS in developing an interim rule on VHS susceptible fish stocks. The Fish and Wildlife Service will also assist the states and APHIS with surveillance through the National Wild Fish Health Survey.

### **Will the Service's sea lamprey control efforts be affected by the APHIS emergency order?**

No. One key element of the sea lamprey control program, which the Service conducts as an agent of the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission, is the release of sterilized male lamprey into the Saint Marys River in Michigan. Since sea lamprey are not on the list of VHS susceptible species, this

rule does not affect the Sea Lamprey Control program. The Service's sterile male lamprey program has reduced the total lamprey population to a point where we are beginning to see signs of lake trout restoration in Lake Huron. Currently, the populations of sterile lamprey are undergoing fish health screening for all reportable pathogens.

**Will the Service's aquatic species restoration programs in the Great Lakes be affected by the APHIS emergency order?**

- The restoration of endangered native mussels in the Upper Mississippi River watershed by the Genoa National Fish Hatchery will be affected by the APHIS order. Walleye – listed as VHS-susceptible fish by APHIS – are used as host fish for the larvae of native mussels such as the Higgins' eye pearly mussel. The Service will work with APHIS to help develop an interim rule that allows resumption of this mussel restoration effort in the Upper Mississippi River.
- Lake trout and other native species the Service stocks into the Great Lakes, such as coaster brook trout, are not included on APHIS list of VHS-susceptible species. Restoration of these species will not be affected by the APHIS order.
- Service support of state agency stocking programs by federal fish hatcheries will not otherwise be impacted. Service programs to restore other endangered, threatened and declining aquatic species are not presently affected by the APHIS emergency order.

**Will the APHIS emergency order impact the Service's ability to meet its treaty obligations to Native American tribes in the Great Lakes?**

No. The Service's stocking of lake trout and other Great Lakes fish species in accordance with Native American treaties will not be affected by the APHIS order. The list of VHS-susceptible fish species do not include the fish species stocked under our treaty obligations.

**What role does the Fish and Wildlife Service play in managing Great Lakes fish populations?**

The Service is a participating member of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission's Fish Health Committee, an intergovernmental, interagency group responsible for coordinating regional efforts in the Great Lakes basin to prevent introduction and dissemination of communicable fish diseases. The Service, in its partnerships with state and other federal agencies, cooperates by lending its expertise to build sustainable fisheries, recover endangered and threatened species, and sustain healthy ecosystems and habitats.